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## A new model for information literacy provision: how to balance cost and quality in an economic downturn

### Conference or Workshop Item

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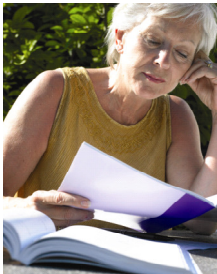
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## LILAC 2011 short paper: A new model for information literacy provision: how to balance cost and quality in an economic downturn

 <p>A new model for information literacy provision: how to balance cost and quality in an economic downturn</p>	<p><b>Slide 1: Title</b></p> <p>The Open University is a distance learning institution. Apart from our full-time research students, few of the 250,000 part-time students studying with us ever visit our campus in Milton Keynes. We have a library, but we can't invite students into the building for face-to-face training.</p> <p>If our students are to achieve information literacy, skills activities need to be included in their learning material.</p> <p>The title of our paper might sound too good to be true, but it's not a fairy tale.</p>
<p>Once upon a time ...</p>  <p>Image: Richard Learoyd, OU Photo Library</p>	<p><b>Slide 2: Image of student studying</b></p> <p>Our story begins with the challenge of integrating information literacy skills into OU learning material.</p>

## Open University students



Image: Karen Parker, OU Photo Library

### Slide 3: Image of Open University graduation ceremony

Undergraduate study at the OU is open to anyone; no entry qualifications are required. Students come to the OU by a variety of routes. They can be aged anywhere from 18 to over 80 and their backgrounds vary – from television comedian to prison inmate. We can't assume that a student studying a particular module has already acquired a set of skills we can build on.

The subject teams in the Library had to start from scratch to devise skills activities. To reflect the different working practices within each faculty, subject teams often adopted a slightly different approach to this challenge.

They didn't always share the same assumptions about the best way to teach a skill, and they didn't always agree about which set of skills should be taught at a particular level of undergraduate study.

### Slide 4: Screenshot of information literacy activity

Content for some of this material was taken and re-used from the Safari tutorial (which you might have already seen). A lot more material was specifically prepared for subject modules, and it was often set within a specific context within the discipline.

These activities were included in printed material, or made available on CD-RoM, or even presented as a .pdf on a module website (like these still in use on a module website in the social work programme).

Allow 1 hour **Activity 5 Information literacy: search a database**  
You will find the guidance for this activity on the course website. When you have completed it, return to the comment below.

**Comment**  
On a practical level, the fact that different agencies may have very different structures, or indeed even cover different geographical areas, can at times make it difficult for staff to link together effectively. When agencies have inadequate resources to meet their objectives, and where there are staff shortages, the quality of the care provided may be compromised. There are instances where conflicts emerge over responsibility for patients or within partner agencies.

**IL activities**

- Module Guide Activity 7 - Citing your sources (37.8KB PDF document)
- Unit 1 Activity 4: Finding out about rights online (IL activity) (39.3KB PDF document)
- Unit 4 Activity 3: Child care second time around (IL activity) (20.8KB PDF document)
- Unit 4 Activity 4: Family group conferences (IL activity) (20.8KB PDF document)
- Unit 6 Activity 6: Investigate difference information sources (IL activity) (43.7KB PDF document)
- Unit 8 Activity 5: Search a database (IL activity) (263.2KB PDF document)
- Unit 10 Activity 3: How are the poor portrayed in the press? (IL activity) (39.2KB PDF document)
- Unit 11 Activity 1 National Service Framework for Older People
- Unit 11 Activity 3: Finding out about risk (IL activity) (137.3KB PDF document)



Image: Jenny Leigh, flickr.com



### Slide 5: Image of pile of paper

You can imagine some of the problems that these varied and often very subject-focused approaches created.

Librarians working in the same subject team generally shared and re-used material, but they might be unaware of content prepared by colleagues in other teams. It wasn't uncommon, for example, to find multiple versions of the same skills activity, each written by a different librarian for a different subject module.

Material tailored for a particular module and set within a specific subject context was often difficult to adapt for re-use in another subject. The material might also have been prepared for study at a higher or lower level.

The different approaches adopted by each subject team wasn't a recipe for a chaotic free-for-all, but it did create a large collection of bespoke, subject-specific content in different formats that wasn't easy to share or to adapt for re-use. Consequently the collection demanded a lot of time to maintain.



Image: Photo Plod, flickr.com



### Slide 6: Image of football referee

As we integrated information literacy activities into more and more modules, maintaining this material became labour-intensive and time-consuming.

We didn't need a revolution, but did we need to impose some order to make this process more efficient and cost-effective.

If subject teams were going to successfully share content and eliminate duplication of effort, they needed to adopt a more consistent approach to information literacy. Two initiatives helped to achieve this.

## Information literacy levels framework



	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
<b>Understand the information landscape</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be able to identify a limited number of key sources of information in the subject area or context</li> <li>Have experienced using a limited number of formats of information (for example, books, journals, websites), as appropriate to the course <i>e.g. introduction to journals</i></li> <li>Be able to articulate the key characteristics of different information types (e.g. print / electronic, primary / secondary, freely available / subscriber only / invisible web) as relevant to the subject or context</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be able to identify a range of key sources of information in the subject area</li> <li>Have experienced using a range of formats of information (e.g. bibliographic records, full text, abstracts)</li> <li>Use knowledge of key resources and their characteristics to independently select appropriate resources for the task as relevant to the subject or context <i>e.g. finding out about databases</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be able to select and use a wide range of sources appropriate to the discipline, from the Library and beyond <i>e.g. introduction to British Standards Online</i></li> <li>Use knowledge of resources and their characteristics to independently select appropriate resources for the task</li> <li>Be aware of sources of current information for keeping up to date and able to select and use those most appropriate to needs</li> </ul>

## Slide 7: Screenshot of Information literacy levels framework

The Information Literacy Unit in the Library developed an 'Information Literacy Framework' to define which skills should be taught at which level of undergraduate study.

The Framework was informed by various sources, including:

- QAA subject benchmarking statements (Quality Assurance Agency)
- The SCONUL 'Seven pillars of Information Literacy' (Society of College, National and University Libraries)
- As well as work by the Association of College and Research Libraries, the Australian and New Zealand Institute for Information Literacy and
- Peter Godwin<sup>1</sup>

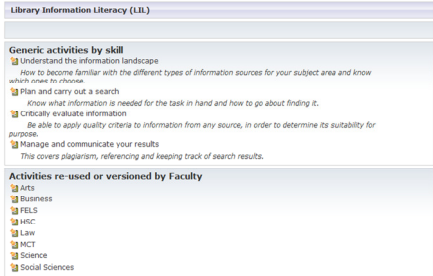
These skills are grouped within four key areas:

- Understand the information landscape
- Plan and carry out a search
- Critically evaluate information
- Manage and communicate your results

The Framework describes skills at three levels of undergraduate study (and it includes examples of appropriate IL activities at each level).

These skills are expressed in generic rather than subject-specific terms. The Framework isn't intended to be a set of rules, but guidance that can adapted by different disciplines. The Health & Social Care Faculty, for example, has worked the Framework into its own skills policy.

<sup>1</sup> Godwin, P. (2003) 'Information literacy, but at what level?', in Martin, A. and Rader, H. (eds.) Information and IT Literacy: Enabling Learning in the 21st Century, London, Facet.

	<p>The Framework helped subject teams in the Library to adopt the same approach to teaching information literacy skills. More importantly, it is helping to provide students with a consistent experience of information literacy during their studies, allowing them the opportunity to practice competencies gained in earlier modules and acquire new skills as they progress through each level of study.</p> <p>It is also providing academic teams with a much clearer idea of the skills students have gained and can demonstrate as they progress to a higher level of study. It's also helping to equip students with the skills and confidence to undertake independent study.</p> <p>The Information Literacy Unit has almost completed work on an information literacy framework Masters level study.</p>
<p>Library Information Literacy</p> 	<p><b>Slide 8: Screenshot of Library Information Literacy collection</b></p> <p>The Library Information Literacy collection (affectionately known as 'LIL') is a bank of peer-reviewed generic skills activities created by subject teams in the Library. All the activities have been prepared for the University's VLE and can be used across subjects. Content is already being used in new modules and we're working to replace bespoke content in older modules.</p> <p><b>Question</b></p> <p>You might be thinking 'do academic teams and their students really like generic material?'</p>

## Re-use and re-version



Within this document you last viewed:  
[Journal article reference](#)

### Find a journal article from a reference

This activity takes you through the process of finding an electronic journal article from a reference, using the Open University Library.

Allow approximately 30 minutes.

After working through this activity you should be able to:

- understand the importance of the key components of a reference
- find a journal article from the A-Z list of journals on the Library website
- find a journal article using the Library's online catalogue

[Next: Journal article reference ►](#)

## Slide 9: Screenshot of LIL activity

The economic downturn has changed our emphasis; we're still working with academic teams to integrate IL, but we're now also trying to help teams to save module production costs.

The Library Information Literacy collection isn't presented as a rigid stock of generic activities that must be used 'as is'. That would make it deeply unattractive to academic teams who want IL content to include relevant sources from the subject they are teaching.

The collection is a 'ready-made' bank of teaching material managed and maintained by the Library. Academic teams can save themselves writing time by selecting appropriate skills content from the collection. They might use this material, for example, to show students how to find a particular journal article, or to complete an assessed task, or build confidence for independent study.

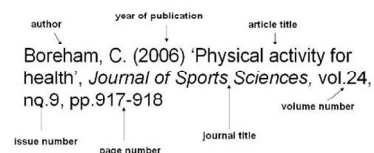
The collection includes activities that have been re-versioned from the original for re-use in a different subject context. Revisions are minor; structure and text are unchanged, only examples used in the activity are replaced to make it more relevant within the context students are studying.

For example, here's the 'Find a journal article from a reference' activity.

## Re-use and re-version

◀ Previous: Find a journal article from a reference

### Journal article reference



The above image highlights the component parts of a reference to a journal article. The first part we need to find an article is usually the journal title followed by the year of publication.

Next: Activity ▶



## Slide 10: Screenshot of LIL activity

The activity begins by identifying each part of a sample reference to a journal article.

## Re-use and re-version

The screenshot shows the Open University Library website. On the left, there is a sidebar with a search bar and a list of links. The main content area has a navigation menu with links: Home, Library information, Services, Collections, Research, and Help. Below the menu, there is a "Welcome" section with a "News" section. The "News" section contains several articles, including "This week's online Library training sessions" and "British journal of forensic practice now available online".



## Slide 11: Screenshot of LIL activity

The activity includes a dual-pane format that lets students to follow instructions and find the article.

The generic activity was included in three modules (two undergraduate modules in Education and a postgraduate module in the Social Sciences). The activity is identical in each module. It has also been re-versioned for use in other undergraduate modules (two in Arts, two in Education, one in Science and one in the Social Sciences). Only the reference has been changed in these activities.

### Question

You might be thinking, 'This is all very well, but isn't this re-versioning just creating the same problem as before, building up a large collection of subject-specific activities here, there and everywhere that you've got to maintain?'



The Editorial Group



Image: Tatiana Don, flickr.com



**Slide 12: Image of cake (the Editorial Group baked cakes for their last meeting!)**

Remember the referee? We have a LIL Editorial Group to oversee and co-ordinate the use and development of the collection.

As well as reviewing content submitted to the collection and advising subject teams on the type of activities they should be creating for it, they also log what has been created.

They record where an activity is being used, and if it has been re-versioned from an original. They also record who is responsible for maintaining that version. Both original and re-versioned content is stored in the LIL collection where everyone can see what is available.

A stitch in time saves ...



Image: Julian Lim, flickr.com



**Slide 13: Image of stopwatch**

We've estimated that building a bank of generic re-useable IL activities has helped subject teams in the Library to save around 219 hours of work between last August and this January. How did we arrive at this figure?

Librarians from each subject team worked together in a service planning exercise to identify and cost the processes involved in creating an IL activity from scratch.

Not surprisingly, they found the largest amount of time was spent drafting content and revising it following feedback from critical readers. But they did include other factors in their reckoning such as: the time taken to discuss the activity with academic teams, time spent finding relevant material to use in the activity, and time taken to format content for the VLE.

Librarians calculated that it took 18.5 hours to prepare a bespoke activity from initial planning to completion. In the same exercise, librarians found that it took 9 hours to adapt an existing bespoke activity for use in another subject module.

	<p>We've used these figures to help gauge the amount of time we're saving by re-using and re-versioning generic content from the LIL collection. The Editorial Group logs each activity used, re-used and re-versioned in module production. Between August 2010 and January 2011, for example, 6 activities were re-used and 12 activities were re-versioned. If librarians had been preparing this content from scratch or trying to re-work bespoke content, it would have taken 111 hours to write 6 new IL activities and 108 hours to re-version content from existing material.</p> <p>I'd take 219 hours with a small pinch of salt; service planning isn't an exact art. The time saving might be a little more, it might be a little less, but it's still a substantial amount.</p> <p>(Someone might ask how long it takes to re-version a LIL activity I don't think anyone has tried to find out yet, but certainly not 9 hours.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 activities were re-used: <math>6 \times 18.5 = 111</math> hours saved</li> <li>• 12 activities were re-versioned: <math>12 \times 9 = 108</math> hours saved</li> <li>• <math>111 + 108 = 219</math></li> </ul>
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### Library products and services



Image: Sifu Renka, flickr.com

1. Knowledge of appropriate content
2. Guidance on the use of content, and managing content
3. Provide information literacy tools and activities to meet and assess information literacy learning outcomes
4. Provide advice and guidance

### Slide 14: Image of cakes on display

The LIL collection is included with other Library products and services offered to academic teams across the University. The benefit of involving librarians in module production is promoted to academic teams under four broad headings:

- Knowledge of appropriate content
- Guidance on the use of content and managing content
- Provide information literacy tools and activities to meet and assess information literacy learning outcomes
- Provide advice and guidance

### Library services module support



### Slide 15: Screenshot of Library Services Module Support page

Academic teams can also find information about how the Library can support module production from the 'Library Services Module Support' page on the University's intranet (which includes the IL skills framework and the LIL collection).



Image: Stephen & Claire Farnsworth, flickr.com



### Slide 16: Image of deckchairs on the beach

What are we doing with the time we're saving? The time we have saved is helping us to develop Library services to our students, such as online training via Elluminate and projects like MyReferences.

Thank you!

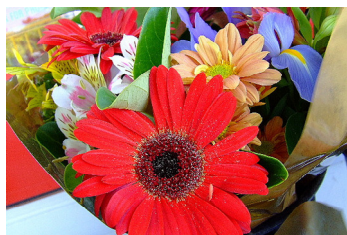


Image: Vanessa Pike-Russell, flickr.com

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